



DEVAL L. PATRICK
GOVERNOR

TIMOTHY P. MURRAY
LT. GOVERNOR

MARY ELIZABETH HEFFERNAN
SECRETARY

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Public Safety and Security
Department of Fire Services

P.O. Box 1025 ~ State Road

Stow, Massachusetts 01775

(978) 567~3100 Fax: (978) 567~3121

www.mass.gov/dfs



STEPHEN D. COAN
STATE FIRE MARSHAL

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Contact: Jennifer Mieth, (978) 567-3381

Cause of North Attleboro Fatal Fire is Smoking

State Fire Marshal Stephen D. Coan, North Attleboro Fire Chief Peter C. Lamb, North Attleboro Police Chief John Reilly and Bristol County District Attorney C. Samuel Sutter announced the cause of the January 23, 2012 fatal fire at 127 Chestnut Street was the improper use of smoking materials. The fire took the life of the 58-year old Michael Sheehan. A 59-year old woman who also lived in the apartment was taken to hospital with critical injuries but has been released. The fire displaced approximately 18 people.

The fire began in the living room of the second floor apartment in the 8-unit building and investigators believe the victim fell asleep while smoking on the couch. State Fire Marshal Coan said, "Smoking remains a leading cause of fatal fires, even as fire deaths have been declining over the past decade. We want smokers to live long enough to quit."

Closed Bedroom Door Saves Woman's Life

Mr. Sheehan was found in the living room but the woman was found in a bedroom in the back of the apartment behind a closed door. Chief Lamb said, "We believe that sleeping with the bedroom door closed probably saved the woman's life. It provided a barrier to the immense heat and toxic fumes that a fire produces."

The fire was jointly investigated by investigators from the North Attleboro Fire Department, North Attleboro Police Department and State Police assigned to the Office of the State Fire Marshal and to the Office of District Attorney Samuel Sutter. Assistance was received from the Code Compliance Unit in the Department of Fire Services.

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